

Episode 45 | Vet Med Deal-breakers: 3 Times It's Best To Move On

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Vet Med deal-breakers, three times it's best to just move on, that's what we're talking about in Episode 45.

Welcome to the Joyful DVM podcast. I'm your host, Veterinarian, and Certified Life Coach, Cari Wise. Whether you're dealing with the challenges in Vet Med, struggling with self-confidence, or you're just trying to figure out how to create a life and a career that you actually enjoy, you'll find encouragement, education, and empowering concepts, you can apply right away. Let's get started.

Hey, everybody. Welcome to Episode 45. Today, I want to talk about the Vet Med deal-breakers - the three times when it's best to just move on. Before I get to those deal-breakers, I want to convey something that I am not sure is landing with you guys. Something about what I believe about jobs in Veterinary Medicine. I think it's really important for you to hear, and this is an, "I don't care if you stay in Veterinary Medicine or you leave it." I really don't care because I know, at the end of the day, that decision is your decision to make, and it's a decision that you will make for yourself.

You will hear me talk a lot about how you can learn how to be happy in Vet Med, and you can absolutely learn how to be happy in Vet Med. You can learn how to be happier for sure. You can learn how to take more control of your own experience if you will. This is wonderful and very, very useful if you want to stay in Veterinary Medicine, long-term. It's also a skill that is wonderful and very, very useful everywhere else in your life. But what it's not going to do is change the deal-breakers because there are deal-breakers.

There are situations, jobs, and career paths that are just not the right fit for us. There are three times that I don't care how much you love this job, It's time to move on. It's time to get out of the position that you're in and get into another one. We get really caught up in this. I'm going to share those three, standby. But before we get there, where we get caught up is in this sense of obligation that we have to continue in this job. That sense of obligation responsibility comes from a lot of places. One of the places that it comes from is from ourselves. We made a decision to pursue this career path, and in that decision, we invested a lot of time and a lot of money. We kept going and going and we got through and we got the degree and we got our licenses and now here we are in this job. When we aren't happy in the job; when we don't like it; when we're starting to recognize that it's not a great fit for us, self-judgment comes in. And with it, that sneaky little voice of, "You should have never done this, but you did, and so now, therefore, you must continue doing it". You chose to pursue this career. So therefore you must continue to work in this career field.

I know you guys are struggling trying to figure out, "Should I stay? Should I go? Should I stay? Should I go?" I know that voice is there. I know those thoughts come up because they came up for me too. They come up for all of us. What I want you to see is just because you made one decision in your life, doesn't mean that you must honor what you believe that decision was going to lead you to for the rest of your life.

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A decision from the past does not create the future. One decision doesn't. It was one decision at a moment in time and when you made that decision, it was the best decision for you at the moment. You made that decision based on the great information and resources available and what was right for you, and it was the perfect decision for you. With the decision to go into Veterinary Medicine, we all had an idea of what it was going to look like. We probably more so, if we're honest, had more of an idea of how we were going to feel once we got there. It was going to be exciting. It was going to be fun. We were going to feel like we were making a contribution. We were going to feel secure in our financial futures. Whatever the thoughts were and all the emotions that were created, that's what kept us going as we pursued the actual education component. Then we get into the real world. The day-to-day, what it looks like to be a Veterinarian or a Veterinary Technician or any of the other roles in the profession, what it looks like, day in and day out of the clinical practice might not have been what we anticipated. For some of us, it was, and for many of us, it's not. That doesn't mean that we made the wrong choice. It just means that we didn't know what we didn't know. Right?

We didn't know what we didn't know, but the judgment keeps us there. The judgment keeps us in jobs that we are not suited for because of how we are afraid to feel if we choose otherwise. We're judging ourselves harshly and that's bad enough, but it's the fear of what everybody else will say that keeps many of us there or the fear of what they are already saying. You may have people in your life who you've felt comfortable enough to have a conversation with say, "Hey, you know, I really don't like Veterinary practice. It's really not for me. I'm thinking about doing something else" and here they swoop in, "What are you talking about? You're meant to do this job. You worked so hard. You invest so much money", and they're feeding back to you all of the fears that you already have; all the thoughts that you already have. Then when we believe them. We think they're right. No, they're right. I decided to do this and I must do this. Guys, that's a lie. You decided one time to do this job. You pursued the education and you got your degree. That piece is done. You decided to take whatever job you're in. That piece is done. What happens next is yet to be decided.

We need to give ourselves the opportunity to just consider that you are the only one who knows what's best for you. Your journey may not end with whatever job you're in Veterinary Medicine. It may take you down another path in Veterinary Medicine to one of the alternative careers and all the different things that you can do with the degree or your journey may take you out of this profession completely. Neither one is better than the other. Both are equally available, and it's only you who's going to know which path is right for you.

Now that all that being said and done, there are three times, and I'm not one for telling you guys exactly what to do, but I'm going to tell you what to do here. There are three times when the job you're in is one you need to get out of. Three situations. You don't need permission. You just need courage. Three times and here are the three times.

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The first time is if you are in an environment that is physically or mentally abusive. If you're in that kind of environment, you need to get out of it. You need to go. There's another job. Life's too short. I don't care how much obligation you have. I don't care how much responsibility you feel. I know you care about the people. I know you care about your clients. I know you care about your patients. I know you care about your coworkers. I know you worry about how they'll survive without you there. They will survive without you there. Because if you are in an environment or somebody in that environment, particularly somebody in a leadership position is being physically and mentally abusive to you, it's a no. It's a no. All those other things, very noble, not worth your life. It's a no. You leave. You find another job. We stay in these jobs because of those other things. We stay in these jobs where we are, it's a mentally and physically abusive situation, dangerous to us and our wellbeing because of the sense of responsibility and because of the sense of obligation because we are taking on the responsibility for how the other people in those jobs will feel if we're gone. First of all, faulty thinking, because you don't create how they feel. You can't predict how they'll feel if you're not there. So that's not your responsibility. Everybody in that environment who is in an environment that is mentally or physically abusive, everybody in that environment has to make the choice to stay or go for themselves. My opinion is, everybody needs to go, because if we continue to stay in an environment that is mentally or physically abusive, then we just perpetuate that behavior. We compromise ourselves for something that we don't control and by doing that we also show the people around us that it's okay to do that. It's not. There's this subculture of Veterinary Medicine that's very dangerous. It's probably, actually, it's not even just Veterinary Medicine, guys. It's every single career field like this kind of behavior happens everywhere. So people in leadership positions and otherwise who are mentally and or physically abusive exists all over the world. In Veterinary Medicine, I think that we are more inclined to stay because of the level of compassion that we have for the humans that we interact with - the clients and our coworkers - we have a sense of obligation that we feel like we're being protective if we stay, and none of that is true. We all just need to get the hell out of there so this doesn't continue. But it's been left to continue for a long time and what happens when we stay there is that we start to doubt ourselves. We start to think that we are the ones who have the problem. We start to think we're just not tough enough. We're just not strong enough. That there's something wrong with us. That we can't handle this environment. The environment isn't supposed to be that way, guys. It's just not. It's a little tricky lie that our mind starts to play with us. You know, better the beast you know than the one you don't. Right? You've probably heard that saying before, and from a lower primitive brain perspective, that's true. Better the discomfort you're familiar with than the uncertainty of what you could get into if you leave. It kind of makes sense. If it's like a really primitive, you're being stalked by predators, and you're staying with a group of assholes, I don't know, but in the Veterinary world, that's not what's happening. If you are truly in a situation that is compromising your physical and mental wellbeing, then you need to get out of there. There are other jobs. We'll figure it out, but staying here isn't the option. There is nothing that you're going to be able to do to fix the environment that you're in. That is not your job. That is not your responsibility. That is not something you control. You can't fix it by yourself especially when there is one person

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who is mentally or physically abusive. That is not your problem to fix. You save yourself. You get out of there. You do something different. You'll find your way. This isn't the only job. Your clients will find other places to go if they don't want to see the people who are still there. They will find their way. Your journey is to take care of you. So, number one, in my three different times when it is just better to move on is if you are in an environment that is mentally or physically abusive, that's number one. It's always a no.

Number two, if you're in a job that's compromising your Veterinary license. So if your license is legitimately at risk because of things happening at that organization, it's a no. You take your license and you go somewhere else. So you know the practice act in the state that you live in. You know what's allowed and not allowed under the practice act. You also can see what's falling on your license. I think one of the greatest risks here for us, one of the places that this tends to really be a thing that we kind of let slide, in a lot of cases has to do with controlled substances. It has to do with the DEA licenses and who's getting their hands in the drug box and all that kind of stuff. Those drugs that are under your name, then you have some liability for that. You're probably really uncomfortable with it, but you don't know what to do about it. You're probably really uncomfortable with it, but you're afraid to stand up and say, "Hey, no, I'm not going to allow my license to be used in that way." I understand the fear because anytime that we have to stand up and say something that we anticipate is not going to be popular with somebody else, we feel nervous. We feel scared about that, but we get to step aside from the way that we feel and say, "Bottom line is my license at risk here." Because if your license is at risk, if your license gets taken away, then you're not going to be able to work in that capacity anymore. Now, some of us don't want to, and that's fine. But if you do, if you're not ready to give up your license in all these situations, basically the question I want you to ask yourself is, "Is giving up my license worth allowing this behavior under my license to continue?" You guys are going to be able to answer that with a no, 99.9% of the time. So number two time when it's better to just move on and find a better fit is if your license is in jeopardy; if your license is being put at risk in a way and being utilized in a way that you are not personally comfortable with. We have a different level of comfort on what we're willing to allow to happen underneath our licenses. That's a personal decision to make. But if you know for you, that the way your license is being utilized is not within your comfort zone, then it's a no, and you move on. I don't care if you like the people. I don't care if you like the quality of medicine. I don't care if you like how much money you make. It's not going to be worth the impact on your personal wellbeing long-term to continue to allow that to happen. You're going to be afraid all the time that something's going to go wrong and it's gonna I'm back on you. So if you have that concern, it's time to find a different job. The job may be just another practice or it may be some other alternative career altogether. Probably just another practice if it's just the license that's the concern. But give yourself permission to seek an alternative. Someplace where you don't have to compromise your license to be able to do your job because you should not ever have to do that. So that's number two.

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Number three is when you are asked to compromise your own personal ethics. This one is a little gray, right? Because we all have a different degree of ethics. We all have things that we believe in and we don't believe in, and that is beautiful. You're supposed to believe in exactly what you believe in, and you're supposed to change your mind if you want to change your mind, but you're not supposed to be forced to think or believe something that you don't. So how do we do this? That's not how this life works. You get to decide for you. So if you are in a job that has asked you to compromise that, then it's a no. Then you find another job.

Now I'm not saying guys, especially with these last two, with the license and with the ethics, that you up and walk in tomorrow and quit without a plan. I'm not saying that at all. What I'm saying is you make a plan. You get busy making a plan to find the right fit - the place that doesn't ask you to compromise your ethics; the place that doesn't ask you to compromise your Veterinary license; and for damn sure, a place that is not mentally and physically abusive. Those three things, it's just a no for me. I know I've said this like a million times already, and I'm going to say it again, It's just a no. All the other fears that come up, we can manage. The fear of how am I going to pay my bills. What am I going to say to my family when I quit my job? They're going to tell me that I was a fool for leaving the job that pays so well and had great hours, but they didn't understand, right, what else was happening. What is it going to say about me if I leave another job? I've already had four jobs. What if I leave another job? How am I ever going to get another job because I've got all these different jobs on my resume? Nobody's ever going to hire me. All of those are thoughts. That is just the muddy soup looping in our minds. This part we can work with. This is the part that we have control over, or maybe the only part we have control over. So we have control over that. We can work with how we manage the mental thought storm that's going to come with our decisions. What we can't do is change the behavior of other people. What we can't do is perhaps stop the way that our license is used in a certain job. You might be able to. You may be able to go in and say, "Hey, look, no more." Like if you love everything else about the job, but you're just really uncomfortable at the way that your Veterinary license is used there. But you really do. Like if you do a very strategic step-by-step analysis like I've discussed before, where you go through everything that you would love in a job, and then you look at your job currently and you measure it up and if everything else is exactly what you want, you're just not comfortable with the way exactly your license is being used there, in that case, then maybe you go in and you have a conversation and you say, "Look, my license is being used in this way which is putting it at risk for these reasons. I'm not willing to do that anymore and continue to be employed here. So my requirement is that my license be used in this way only and if you're not willing to make the adjustment, then I'm going to seek alternate employment." That's the way I would say it.

Now at this point in my life, I'm not afraid to say much of anything. You guys know this. I also know 20 years ago, I would have been scared out of my bridges to have that conversation. But I also know I would have had it because I wouldn't have been willing to risk my license over things like that. So just

decide if you know it and you're scared to have a conversation, let's talk. I can help you have a conversation. If you see that your license at risk, but there are also other things, let's look at the whole picture and figure out why are we really still here in this particular job.

Then number three, the ethics. That's another one because it is an opinion-based thing. Right? You have your opinion about what you believe about things. I'm just going to use just a very black and white example just for the sake of having an example here, declaw, it's very polarized. I'm in the US so it's still a thing here. So we all have an opinion and if you work in a practice that declaws and you don't, that's not, you ethically, don't think that's the right thing to do, but you're required to do it, so you keep doing it to keep your job, you're in a bit of a conundrum, right? Because every time you do a declaw, it goes against your own personal ethics. You're compromising yourself every time you do that. You're actually taking a notch out of your self-esteem every time you do that. Why? Because you're not standing up for yourself. You're not standing up for what you believe in. You can strongly live an anti-declaw and still allow somebody else to believe in declaw. That's okay. We don't need everybody to be on our side to believe what we believe. We just have to know what we believe and then we have to take action from there. So anytime that you're being asked and expected to compromise your ethics in your job, I want you to recognize that the impact of that goes beyond just the moment when you feel uncomfortable. It is recurrent. It is cumulative, and it also has a very net negative effect on your actual self-confidence. So for me, it's a no. So those three things, if you are in an environment that is emotionally or physically abusive, get out of it. There are other jobs. If you are in an environment that is compromising your Veterinary license, get out of it. It's not worth it. And if you are in a job that compromises your ethics, get out of it. It's not worth it.

The reasons that we stay are out of fear, primarily. Fear of what we will do. Fear of what other people will say. Fear of how we will be judged. Fear of not being able to find another job. Guys, fear keeps us frozen. It keeps us alive, but it doesn't keep us safe. It's not worth it to give your life to these things. The physical and mental abusiveness that goes on in this profession, if you recognize it and you feel empowered to get out of it, get out of it. You'll find another job. The other two, the license being at risk and the ethics being compromised, I'm not saying you have to walk out today, but I'm saying let's give ourselves permission to start looking. Let's like our reason. Let's not look at our reason and say, "No, I was weak. I just couldn't hack it. I walked away from a good thing." All the little lies that'll come up. Many of us just need permission to make a change, and I know this probably better than anybody else.

I'm going to give you an example and it's not even veterinary-related. I got married when I was 25 years old and a few years into that marriage, I knew it wasn't a good fit. It was just not. It's not a good fit. Even though I knew that I wasn't going to leave. I wasn't going to leave because I had a story and I had a rule that I'd created for myself, that you don't leave. If you get married, you don't get divorced. That was my rule. All kinds of reasons why that became my rule, but that's the rule that I had for

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myself. So if I am going to get married, I am not going to get divorced. So I had made that choice to get married and a few years into it, I was very unhappy. It was not a good match. It wasn't abusive. It wasn't awful. It wasn't wonderful, but it wasn't what I would hope that a marriage would be like. It wasn't what I had envisioned a marriage to be like. It was literally coexisting, and as I looked at the rest of my life through that lens, I felt very small. I felt very suffocated. I felt very hopeless because I had made this decision to marry this man and I wanted to keep my word and I wanted to honor my own word to myself over never getting divorced. I didn't want to be that person who got divorced. So I stayed and we both stayed. There wasn't arguing. There wasn't yelling. There wasn't any of the stuff that you would classify as a bad marriage. But as the longer I stayed, the lower my self-confidence got. The less I was able to dream about what I wanted for myself. Everything was in the confines of this decision that I had made. Everything was restricted by it. There was literally for me, no way out. It was me trying to fix all the things around it to feel better. Even though in my soul, I knew I just needed to get out of that one thing, but that was just not an option. It wasn't until I finally got to a point that I sought some help for a completely different reason. I think therapy is a wonderful thing for many of us, especially if we get into those extreme burnout phases. I definitely was there in my Veterinary career. So this is where a kind of happening simultaneously. No, no surprise. Let's just recognize that as well. They definitely could have a compounding effect. So I finally hit my own personal breaking point where "Who cares what anybody thinks I'm going to see. I'm going to get some help here. I'm going to see a therapist." We started talking and she asked me about my marriage, and my quick answer was, "It's fine. It's great. It's fine. That's not the problem." It was like, for me an off-the-tail, like, we're not talking about this. This is not the problem. There is nothing to fix here. There's nothing to change here. Just leave it as it is. And so time went on and I got help with my burnout in Veterinary Medicine and I started to learn some new skills or to make some new decisions for myself and a conversation happened in my marriage. That was a deal-breaker for me. Now, remember there were no deal-breakers. I am going to stay in this rubber. I had made this choice and I was going to do this thing. But this conversation was unanticipated. This conversation was not one that I even anticipated we would ever have. It didn't go along with any conversations we'd ever had before. What came out in that conversation, there was a very clear deal-breaker for me. At that moment, I'm in like complete distress because I had the foundation of what I believed about this relationship in the future and the decisions I'd already made, and now this new data point that didn't fit at all with the other. It was one of those things that you just can't make them work together. But if you never leave and you need to leave, how do you reconcile that? So I already had this relationship right with this therapist. So I went in, I'm like, here's the deal. I just laid it all out just the same. Like, this is what happened. I mean, I was pissed and I'm not like, typically like an overtly, let me just vent and scream for a while. But like three days later, I'm still in that place. And no, it was not cheating for those of you who are super curious. It wasn't that. So I had this conversation with her. It was the very first conversation. She asked all the right questions. She asked me about the relationship. She asked me about all the different things and she is a therapist, right? She is also a marriage counselor by the way, which is kind of funny considering what I want to say next. She looked me straight in the eye

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and she said, "Cari, you need to leave. You need to leave him quickly and go on with your life." I was stunned. That wasn't even an option for me. But as soon as she gave me the permission, it was clear.

I never would have taken that step on my own because I was so stuck in my story about what I do and I don't do. So the reason I tell you this story is because there may be some of you out there who just need somebody to give you some permission to get on with your life. To recognize that the decision that you made, it was an intentional part of your journey, no matter what happens next. Whether you just find a different position in Veterinary Medicine. Whether you find an alternative career in Veterinary Medicine. Whether you close the chapter on Veterinary Medicine, you make a pivot and you move towards something completely different. You might just need permission to help you take that first step. I want you to know from me, you've got it. You've got it without any judgment. I've got no skin in the game as to whether or not you stay in Veterinary Medicine.

Yes, my company is called Joyful DVM. It's not called Joyful DVM in Veterinary practice and that's for a reason because I don't think all of us are going to find our joy staying in this job. I don't know if I say that enough to you guys because what I don't want you to think is that with the tools and the skills that we teach here, that the ultimate outcome for everybody should be to figure out how to be happy in Veterinary Medicine as a practicing clinician. No, that's not the point. The point here is to use that area of your life, which for most of us is Veterinary Medicine, which is the catalyst, which becomes the breaking point, to use that to help you live your life the way you were always supposed to live it. That may or may not include Veterinary Medicine. To teach you the skills that you need for the rest of your life because they're so valuable to understand what's really happening in the world instead of continuing to see it through the conditioning that we have, kind of just been adapted to just because of the environment that we grew up in - the rules of our families; the opinions of our families - all of those, the beliefs of our colleagues, what we absorb in our Veterinary practices, as far as what's real about a practice job, all of that stuff's just conditioning. It's just other people's thoughts and opinions that we have just taken on as absolute truth and generationally over time. It's not even just one population of people.

If we don't learn the skills to start to question all those beliefs, to start to decide for ourselves what we want and what's true, then we will never live our true path. We would never find our true purpose. We will never live our journey and our journeys are individual. Where many of us are stuck in this moment, the reason that I want to talk about this today is because many of us are stuck where we're starting to recognize that in our hearts and our souls that our path forward doesn't include continuing to do what we've always done, but we're so caught up in the rules, in the decision we've made to pursue this career, and so, therefore, we should always be in it and all the other pieces of it. What it would mean financially to change positions. What we might endure from the opinions of our friends and family if we make a different choice. We're so trapped in that we can't even give ourselves permission to consider anything different. I just want to give you that permission because here's what

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I know a hundred percent. I know that you're here for a reason. I know that you have a purpose. I know your journey up until this exact moment in time has been intentional - the good and the bad - and I know all of it is working for your good. I know what comes next is just endless possibilities. I know that whatever you have in your heart; whatever you're interested in; whatever your desires are; whatever you dream to pursue is there on purpose. It's not an accident. It's not foolish. I know it's intentional. And I know that you're here at this exact moment in time listening to this podcast because you're supposed to hear it. It's needed and I know this even if you're not sure right now, and that's okay. I just want to be the one, if nobody else has done it, to give you permission to be yourself; to live your life; to make your choices. I want to help you not be afraid to live into that if that's what you need. If you need somebody who just cheers for you no matter what your choices are, that's what we do in Vet Life Academy and we're doing that free workshop coming up. It's the very last Sunday of the month, from 1 PM to 4 PM, the Discover Your Purpose workshop. We're going to be talking about this kind of stuff in that workshop.

So if you're not already on the waitlist, get on it. So you'll get the information as soon as that registration opens. So joyfuldvm.com/purpose to make sure that you get the notifications when that registration opens. Last Sunday, I think it's March 28th, 2021 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM Central Time is the Discover Your Purpose workshop. We're going to dig into this kind of stuff.

Guys, Vet Med is one decision. It does not define the rest of your life. There's not a single decision you've made in your life that is going to define what comes next. You get to decide that. It's scary to think about stepping out in your own way, but you can do it.

Alright, my friends, that's going to wrap it up. I hope this is helpful. I would love to know what you think. Drop me some comments. If this has been useful, share it. Let's spread the word here. We don't need to feel trapped. We don't need to feel helpless.

By all means one last time, three things, if this is what your experience is, you need to find another job. If you are in a situation that is physically and or mentally abusive, it's a no. Start looking for something different. If you're in a job that is compromising your Veterinary license, it's a no. Start looking for another job. And if you're in a job that compromises your personal ethics, it's a no. Start looking for another job. You're worth it.

Your job, your clients, your patients, none of those is more important than you. You're the only one who can live your life. You're here for a reason and you should not compromise the rest of your life over things like this. You know in your soul that this is not the right place. I give you permission to start looking for what's best for you.

Alright, my friends, that's going to wrap it up for today and I'll see you next time.

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We can change what's possible in Vet Med together.